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PART III EIGHT PAGES

IMPENDING GERMAN BLOW IN THE WEST

What Strength the Kaiser Can Draw From the East for a Strong Offensive

By HILAIRE BELLOC

of "Elements of the Great War" England's Most Distinguished Military Critic)

THE great war at this moment is halted in a suspense which is only a preparation for the great action

immediately impending. Snow has fallen upon the Lower Alps end checked the Austrian pressure upon the flank of the Piave line. The crest of Monte Tomba, the only point on the last mountain wall which the enemy reached, and therefore the only good observation point whence the enemy could command the plains to the Adriatic, was retaken the French, and since the supplementary Italian success action in this sector would seem to have come, for the moment, to

Upon the main Western front, through France and Belgium, there is no great action proceeding. Both parties are summing up their strength for the struggle of the approaching fighting season, which each hopes to make final and decisive.

The time at which I write this, the first f my weekly summaries for The Tribune, stherefore suited for a general review of

How do the opposing forces approach he fighting season of 1918?

efore the full strength of the United states can be brought to bear, either in n or in materials or in building powerat is, tonnage; or in counter attacks gainst the submarines by sea.

The Two Phases of The Submarine Campaign

But these general outlines, with which all the world is familiar, need precision. The severity of the submarine campaign cannot be clearly defined, but we must clearly recognize its various parts. It is freeted against two main objects-the ilitary communications of the Allies and he civilian supply, mainly of the British les (which depend for their life upon other Western powers-as, for exaple, the supply of Italy with coal.

These two objects of the submarine camaign are closely interconnected and overable. It is in the element of supply, rather that the submarine offensive has produced s most noticeable effects, and this for the mason that military communications have is disastrous, while there was and is a very large margin of safety for civilian

The submarine offensive conducted by How German Forces the enemy upon an extensive scale for Are Disposed deven months has passed through two main phases. There was first the phase in which the sinkings were not only absosecond, but in which they were also relatively much greater compared with the

de summer of last year. The second phase has been one in which while the curve of Positive loss has fluctuated its general average has been declining, and during which the corresponding positive factor against this negative—the building to replace ioss has regularly increased, but at a rate which has not been communitaled to the public, and therefore is not open to discussion.

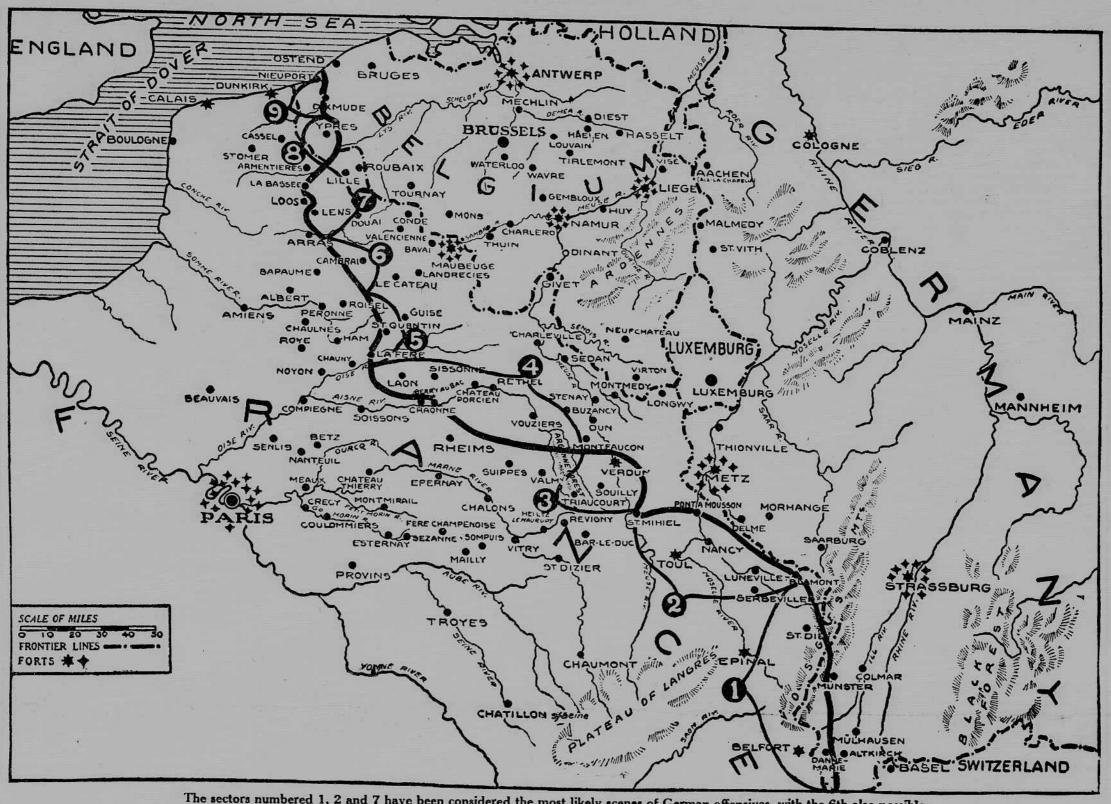
What we hope for, what we cannot prophesy and what only the future will confirm or deny is that the third phase, in exaggerated one, for the following reasons: the net result of loss and gain, will show a declining curve.

An Estimate of The Chances on Land

he chances of war more accurately. ine; a rather larger number of Bul- of the Western line is concerned. Reinforcement of material from East to West, though it is considerable, canof the main problem.

Russia's having ceased to fight for now a less upon the East than upon the West. full year. What are the rough figures of

ANALYSIS OF THE WESTERN FRONT



The sectors numbered 1, 2 and 7 have been considered the most likely scenes of German offensives, with the 6th also possible.

at present upon the Italian front, rather days. less than half facing the Rumanians and ben rightly regarded as vital to the cam-Eastern forces facing Russia would be the Russians. If one counted by units the Eastern forces facing Russia would be men who are merely watching a doubt

we have to consider. Of its 3,000,000 men thing within the zone of the armies. They lutely larger than they were during the upon the two fronts the general figure to might-it is conceivable-halve that numretain is that two-thirds are upon the West ber, and much more than halve its value, three. For if you have not the reserve improbable one, because of two obvious He attacked in very large force, with a and one-third upon the East, so far as by leaving for this minimum only the numbers of divisions alone are concerned. older or fatigued portions of their forces. for recruitment you cannot send a divi-There are about 160 German divisions on Limit of Reduction the West front (the most precise and recent estimate, which cannot, of course, pre- Of Eastern Forces tend to be exactly accurate, is 157). There The East front includes great spaces of significant and should be retained. The Allies. are the equivalent of eighty German divimarsh and lake regions, which permit of a French offensive in the Champagne used The enemy has the advantage of greater attempt to break through the Italian left French line the argument against the

army may now be counted out, the German men for the West and add another 50 per four German divisions; the big effort of wounded. during 1918 by the extra 50 per cent from garians (supposing that present political in the middle of the summer used up the French alone have had losses on the spring, he will stake heavily on that card. the war for the German Empire to comthe East. Such a view would be a greatly conditions stand), it is a maximum.

rest camp. Units which could not be used in drawn upon. the furnace of the West are sent there to A little sample of the way the enemy do the work of police, which is all that is has used this relief of pressure on the With the second element action by required. At least a quarter of the Gerand-it is otherwise. Here we can deal man divisions in the East are landwehr of ten selected days whereof we now have full ter, accounted for no less than ninety-three the strain now suffered in Central Europe, main sectors: with figures fairly precise and estimate the kind which will never be used in active information (about eight weeks ago), we divisions, while the Battle of Cambrai may and long suffered, and that which is only service against the French, British or find four German divisions coming from have used anything from twenty-five to beginning to be felt among the Allies. First, we must regard the Bulgarian Americans. Another portion (fluctuating the East to the West: the 24th, 1st and thirty. and Turkish armies as occupying their but always considerable) is made up of 107th Reserve divisions and one active Altogether, the eight months of fighting probability of an enemy offensive or group own fields outside the critical sectors, divisions which have been hammered on division, the 1st. We find in the same during the open season of 1917 compelled of offensives, and even of this military They are faced and held in Macedonia, the West front and sent to the East, where short period the 19th Landwehr sent back the withdrawal for recruitment and repair policy maturing early in the year. Syria and Mesopotamia. There are two, there is no fighting, to recover. At any to the Eastern front after a comparatively of at least 221 German divisions. You Possibly three, Turkish divisions lent to one moment these "resting" divisions are short period in the West, and probably a may say the whole of the available German the Central Powers upon their Eastern out of calculation, so far as reinforcement second reserve division going back a few force on the Western front was put

bank; but the great bulk of the Turkish not be upon anything like the scale of oneand Bulgarian forces may be counted out third to two-thirds. It is not generally appreciated, for instance, that in aeroplanes That problem lies upon the Italian and the Germans were using more than ten in rench fronts, and what we have to conder is the effect upon those fronts of tion of heavy artillery, again, is very much

strong; in the field they are about 3,000,- talions were continually being formed of this position in a mechanical enterprise, First, let us note that the alternative to and British, stood upon what is called "the 000. Of the Austro-Hungarian forces act- selected men and sent westward—the the first thing we should ask, in order to this offensive upon the part of the enemy, Piave line." ually fighting, rather more than half are transfer taking, as a rule, about twelve appreciate his chance of continuing with though widely suggested, is improbable. Of all sectors on the Western front this

the East a line which in all its sinuosities length. They have had perhaps one man The German army is the kernel of what to the yard for this duty, counting everyaction. But in reckoning the rate of be accepted and the Prussian military magreat and rich fraction of Northern Italy.

At the present reduced rate of a German twelve months been used as a sort of such divisions of first class men might be Whole Force Was Used

days later.

The whole position, therefore, may be tions of it more than twice over.

to be repaired altogether, or for a shorter guessing where his offensive stroke will enemy success in the autumn, one supreme

Twice Over

these pieces of machinery, when fully paring to use, while he yet has it and be- in turn we shall discover what are the occupied, wears out very rapidly and has fore the full effort of America is felt, the respective advantages and disadvantages. to be withdrawn for repair. Each piece advantage given him by the collapse of The southernmost, the Italian front, has to be kept out of line for a longer time Russia, the prophets are hard at work had, at the moment of the last great

Instrian forces (which means, of year, and particularly since the final col- cent of his active machines continuously in most you can do, even with the fullest out of the war. Tremendous as was the

Magyar, Slav, Rumanian, German, subject Tarnopol, a considerable, though unknown, are obsolete and cannot be used for work are, whatever is calculable in the problem combined captures in prisoners and guns ago, when they were immensely stronger to the Hapsburg monarchies and con- proportion of the younger and more vig- at all, nor even their spare parts with- before you. If we confine ourselves to than had ever taken place before within in proportion to the Allies than they are scripted willingly or unwillingly) are not orous elements. Apart from the move- drawn for use in more modern machines that limit in this moment of strained at- so short a time—it proportion to the younger and more modern machines. The now. It is a sector of peculiarly difficult two-thirds, but are more than one-half, as ments of divisions as a whole, there has And a certain unknown proportion, perlarge as the German forces. The Germans, been a continuous withdrawing of younger haps another quarter, consists of engines group of offensives is launched, we shall mination to continue the war, and its courses and from being sub

wastage a staff counts a division twice chine left unbeaten.

sions on the East front (79 numbered very thin observing line. But there is a up sixty-six enemy divisions. The pre- unity, but he has the disadvantage of much flank and to reach the Venetian plain and choice of Alsace is the extreme difficulty of limit to its reduction. It is generally con- vious British offensive on the Arras front greater suffering at home, which has been cut off the defenders' main communica- the ground, while the talk of turning the A superficial and false conclusion would ceded that if the German Empire can ulti- used up seventy-eight. The battle on the prolonged over a much greater period. He tions. be that, since what was once the Russian mately draw upon a further half million Verdun front in August used up twenty- has also suffered more in dead and It is unlikely that, after the great lapse thing is possible in war—is not convincing.

before Laon in October exhausted twelve. and even they have a slightly lower per- passed. The Russian front has now for nearly division, the equivalent of at the most fifty Minor operations used up another twelve. centage. The Italians have a still lower twelve months been used or most of circle along the divisions of first along the division that the division of the division that the division of the division of the division that the division of the division of the division that the division of the division of the division of the division that the division of the division that the division of the division of th percentage, the British one far lower. while American aid, when it comes, will come in perfectly fresh.

The tremendous fighting for Passchen- So far as the other element, food, is con-

Everything, therefore, points to the

An Attack Is Likely

through twice over, and, of course, por- Now, what are the points upon which such an offensive would most probably be compared to a man using 157 pieces of With the Western Allies definitely on launched? Theoretically, almost any constandardized machinery only by the con- the defensive-one might almost say pub- siderable sector on the Western line, betinual employment of which can he prevent licly announcing that they are on the de- tween the Adriatic and the North Sea, the breakdown of some plan. Each of fensive-and with the enemy openly pre- might be chosen. But if we examine each

There have already been withdrawn time while spare parts are being renewed. be delivered.

The man, we will say, has about 50 per All prophecy in war is ridiculous. The hoped that a decision here might put Italy

course, all the various groups of peoples, lapse of Russia in the summer before action. But of that 50 per cent a quarter knowledge, is to show what the chances blow delivered by the enemy—with greater of the Germans was made and failed long armies, heavily reinforced by the French dation.

out a breakdown, would be the rate of This alternative suggestion is that the line appeared to offer the greatest advanenemy will not deliver an offensive stroke, tages to the enemy. It was far less strong of Lille, and the sector of Wancy; the sector of Lille, and the sector of Upper Alsace. To grasp the significance of the figures but will watch us as we watch him; that he than that of the Adige, the Piave being men who are merely watching a doubt- I am about to quote, we must understand will trust to the development of political easily forded in all its central part, and the larger, but the divisions in the East ful situation, you cannot reduce it beyond that the "using up" of a division in a great trouble among the Allies, to the effect of its left flank in the hills, parallel to the have been "milked" to reinforce those in a certain minimum. The Germans and modern battle does not mean its destructions, being high-Austrians between them are watching in tion, but only its exhaustion and the necessity of withdrawing it for rest and re- can propose at the right moment more perilous line was only adopted because it continuously the reinforcements necessary is little short of a thousand miles in cruitment. Thus the same division often liberal peace terms than he has yet concevered Venice and saved from invasion, appears twice or thrice in a prolonged sidered, in the hope that those terms will as compared with the line of the Adige, a diately to the north—the sector of Lille—

Now, the enemy already had taken all mirably served with roads and railways used as two divisions, one thrice used as This, though a possible policy, is a most the advantage he could of this situation. power to give leisure for resting and men elements. First, every month that passes concentration of not less than 2,500 guns, American effort will be felt; second, the between the Piave River and Lake Garda. Violation of Swiss The figures of German wastage in this strain upon the enemy, both economic and Until the snow made his communications sense during the great battles of 1917 are political, is more severe than upon the impossible he sacrificed men and spent munitions upon a most lavish scale in an

Analysis of The Western Front

Meuse-and may be called the sector of and his summary of reasons is strong.

3. The sector of Verdun.

5. The sector of St. Quentin. northward to the late battlefield of

Ypres and the North Sea. Of these nine sectors the three to which | covered and watched.

Points on the Western Line Where Big Attacks Are Likely to Fall in the Spring

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public attention has recently been mostly directed are the first (Vosges), second (Nancy) and seventh (Lille), though late events have made one school of writers suggest the sixth (Cambrai). Why are the others-the Verdun, Champagne, St. Quentin, Ypres and maritime sectorsregarded as less probable points of attack?

As to three of them, the Verdun, Champagne and Ypres sectors, the reason they are thought on the whole as less likely to receive the shock is that each of them, having been the scene of a highly developed system of attack or defence in the past, is now provided with a mass of local communications and concentration points, which are the chief strength of a modern

Old Battle Grounds Ready for Defence

To renew the attempt on Verdun, for instance, would be to attack deliberately on a twenty-mile front every inch of which has been studied for months and learned in the practical school of the great battle now eighteen months past. It would be to attack on a sector where hundreds of miles of roads and railways have come into being behind the French lines through that great battle, and where the best points for concentration, whether for munitionments or men, are known by heart and have all been tested by experience. It would be attacking over ground broken by the original enormous struggle.

What is thus true of Verdun is true of every sector in which one of the great actions of the West has taken place. The argument against an attack in the St. Quentin sector is that an advance there would take the enemy over ground he has himself ravaged and desolated during the retreat from Noyon. It has in its favor, however, the fact that it is the junction place of the two allied armies and, politically, that an advance there would be a direct threat to Paris.

There remain the sector of Cambrai, the open sector between the Meuse and the Vosges, between Metz and Toul, which may be called the sector of Nancy; the sector

Cambrai has the advantage that it is the best served in the way of communications In each case, of course, the attack would

Of the two alternative points upon the line around by Switzerland-though everyof time that must pass before his mountain Defiles through Swiss territory here are forces upon the West can be reinforced cent of the quarter million of Austro-Hun- the Germans upon the Chemin-des-Dames Of the belligerent nations in the West communications will be free again next difficult, and this is hardly the moment in eleven, and the subsequent French blow same scale as the Germans and Austrians, The opportunity there would seem to have mit a new breach of ordinary morals. The fact that this movement was widely advertised by the Germans a year ago was almost enough to make us rule it out.

For the remaining French sector of There remains the Western front Nancy much more may be said. It has a proper, from the Alps to the North Sea great base behind it at Metz, it is open which the French would naturally be ex-1. The sector of the Vosges Moun- pected to cover and save. It has not yet tains and forests, including the small been the theatre of any great action since part of Upper Alsace now in French the war of movement ceased in the West and siege lines were established. I see M 2. The open sector, with Metz behind Tardieu has written suggesting that this it on one side and Toul on the other, sector may most probably attract the which runs from the Vosges to the enemy. His words always have weight,

In conclusion we must remember that such a list as I have given here has no 4. The Champagne, much the largest relation to forecasting or to the stupid form of sensationalism which pretends to have unmasked the enemy's design. It is 6. The sector of Cambrai, stretching merely a very brief summary of the carculable elements for and against the various parts of the line as to the theatre of the enemy's operations this year. We 8. The sector of Ypres, which was must also remember that, since surprise is the scene of the British effort last an essential of success, he must depend more upon tactical novelty in weapons or 9. The maritime sector, between method of attack than on the choice of ground when all ground is continuously